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we're making  
our families  
stronger.



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families  
Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

# TANF eNews

October 2014

An Electronic Newsletter from the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services

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## ATTOP Update

*Meet You at the TOP!*

Over the last month, the IT team made significant progress with the development of the system. As we build this new system, the team is applying lessons learned from legacy system drawbacks, things like context-sensitive narrative and notes across the system, and ease of use (usability principles, discussed in the September newsletter).

Another cool feature of the new system is to combine what we call extensibility and master data management!! We want this system to provide recommendations and channel information for all workforce development programs that DWS offers. TANF, after all, uses the same types of information that many other DWS programs use (such as, client biographical information, demographics, household composition, financial data, program eligibility, employer data, and more). We understand that this is one of the strongest motivations to bring TANF under the DWS workforce development umbrella—to leverage workforce resources, and get our TANF participants to work.

We are getting ready for more demonstrations soon and releasing the software for User Acceptance Testing (UAT) in November. The table on the following pages will provide an overview of the scope of the IT system, and where we are now in development of the system.



| Main Modules              | Main Modules                            | Comments   |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Search                    |   | Search for a client, or a case; the entry point into the system.   |
| Pre-screening             |   |  |
|                           | Bio and Demographics                    | Wizard interface, prototype complete.  |
|                           | Contact Information                     |  |
|                           | Education                               |  |
|                           | Employment                              |  |
|                           | Household                               |  |
|                           | Financials                              |  |
|                           | Screening Results                       |  |
| Application Management    |   |  |
|                           | Application Intake                      |  |
|                           | Application Processing                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wizard interface; 1st iteration of development is complete, and systems integration testing is ongoing.</li> <li>• Data conversion programs to migrate data from ANSWER are complete and currently being tested.</li> </ul>   |
| Program Management        |   |  |
|                           | Program Creation                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The functionality here can be compared to the Budget Unit Notebook in ANSWER.</li> <li>• Workers can create assistance units and determine eligibility for specific DWS programs (for example, TEA, Work Pays, Diversion).</li> </ul>   |
|                           | Eligibility Determination & Maintenance |  |
| Work Readiness Assessment |   |  |
|                           | Demographics                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comprehensive, structured assessment that can be configured based on business need and relevancy to the client being assessed.</li> <li>• This business process can be performed independently based on process or client needs (not necessarily to create a program).</li> <li>• The result of this activity is the Work Readiness Assessment Worksheet.</li> <li>• Prototyping of this module is complete.</li> </ul> |
|                           | Employment Factors                      |  |
|                           | Education Factors                       |  |
|                           | Housing Situation                       |  |
|                           | Transportation Factors                  |  |
|                           | General Health                          |  |
|                           | Mental Health                           |  |
|                           | Substance Abuse                         |  |
|                           | Domestic Violence                       |  |
|                           | Pregnancy                               |  |
|                           | Child Care & Parenting                  |  |
|                           | Suggested Work Readiness Resources      |  |

| Main Modules                           | Main Modules                                 | Comments  |
|--|--|---|
| Self-Sufficiency / Career Pathway Plan |  |   |
|  | Employment & Action Plan                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on the outcome of the comprehensive assessment, workers can provide pre-configured and recommended services to the participants.</li> <li>Prototyping of this module is underway.</li> </ul>   |
|  | Barrier Reduction Plan                       |   |
|  | Referrals Management                         |   |
|  |  |   |
| Payments Management                    |  |   |
|  | Cash Benefits Maintenance                    | Currently being designed.   |
|  | Provider Payments (WISE) Maintenance         |   |
|  |  |   |
| Workload Management                    |  |   |
|  | Supervisor Workspace                         | Not started; preliminary research and analysis in progress.   |
|  | Workload Queues                              |   |
|  | Interviews Management                        |   |
|  |  |   |
|  | DWS / TANF Client Registration & Maintenance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First development iteration is complete and going through systems integration testing.</li> <li>The concept behind this module is that when a client is registered for TANF, he becomes a client of DWS, and any DWS program can access this information.</li> </ul>   |
|  | Arkansas Employer Maintenance                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First development iteration is complete and going through systems integration testing.</li> <li>Employers interact with TANF, WOTC, WIA, UI, New Hire, and the multitudes of programs that DWS offers. The shared System of Record concept is the thought process behind building this functionality.</li> </ul>   |
|  | DWS Service Provider Maintenance             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are various provider types offering different types of services—transportation, education, training, WEX.</li> <li>While currently focused on TANF provider needs, this module can be relatively easily extended to be used by other DWS programs.</li> </ul>  |
|  |  |   |
| Program Performance Management         |  |   |
|  | Reporting module                             | Reporting functionality needs to be ready by the time the new system rolls out. While work on this module has not yet started, the IT team prioritized it in this order. This is still in design phase  |
|  | Quality Assurance                            |   |
|  | Overpayments & Collections                   |   |
|  |  |   |
| Utilities Management                   |  |   |
|  | Application Users                            | The User Management, System Parameters, and Lookup Value sub-modules are developed but are currently not the primary focus of the IT team. Since Utilities Management is a back-end function that the majority of field staff do not access, these screens are more of a “quick and dirty” minimum viability solution for Central Office Systems Support. |
|  | System Parameters                            |   |
|  | Lookup Code Values                           |   |
|  | Integrated Policy & Procedures               |   |



## From the TANF Assistant Director

By Phil Harris, Assistant Director, DWS-TANF

I like to use the phrase “Partners in building a better Workforce Development program” to describe the future direction of TANF in Arkansas. My desire is to use this program transition as an opportunity for innovation. Be it with delivering TANF specific services or the configuration of the new IT system, the TANF program will be transformed to be part of an integrated workforce development system. However, the most important opportunity for innovation, as I see it, is with our people. I will be conducting extensive discussions with senior management on how we can plan, develop, and execute staff centered personal and professional development programs. I truly believe this is the key to developing a competent and excellent TANF workforce at every level.

We are reaching a threshold in our transition planning process, and I think it is time for me to visit our local offices and start sharing our transformation strategy, and collect your feedback at the same time. The newsletter has been a wonderful channel for me to communicate with you on our progress, but I strongly believe that nothing beats a face-to-face meeting.

The response to the puzzles, recommendations to naming the new system, and ideas about the TANF program in general have been overwhelming. I plan to address many of these questions during my listening tour. You will also see, beginning with the next issue, responses to the questions you have asked. I have asked the ATTOP IT team to give a detailed update on their system development status, which I hope will encourage you to get more engaged in this process. After all, this is a system being developed for you!!

The TANF program wants its participants to get a job, and become self-sufficient. I see a lot of workforce development opportunities in DWS that can potentially benefit our participants, and even applicants who do not qualify for TANF itself, but instead can be referred to non-TANF programs. Either way, many of our participants need to overcome significant and unique barriers, unlike the wider population. But this is more the reason as to why we need engage with our sister divisions, learn and utilize best practices, look for economies of scale, and build a strong program that ultimately benefits the TANF customer, or should I say, the DWS customer!! Thanks to everyone committed to our success. Keep embracing the change!!

## September 2014 Puzzle Contest Winners

Winners of the puzzle contest in last month’s newsletter are:

- Lanetta Bryant
- Michelle Ryan
- Sharon Stringer

Congratulations!! Great job!

## ATTOP Puzzle 4 Solution

The following list identifies the words that make up the solution for the puzzle that appeared in last month’s newsletter:

1. Satisfaction
2. Usability
3. Embracing
4. Testerman
5. Jim Collins
6. Shaw
7. Camden
8. Straightforward
9. CNA
10. AND



## TANF Innovation and Teamwork

### *Alive and Well in the Russellville Local Office*

By Christy Fuerst, TANF Program Area Coordinator

We commend the TANF staff members in the Russellville local office for their innovation and dedication to serving our participants and improving the TANF program in Arkansas.

TANF staff members in the Russellville local office spend much of their time brainstorming, developing, and implementing new strategies to stay on the forefront of our endeavor to move TANF to an engagement program and assume TANF eligibility responsibilities. All of this hard work is to assist low-income Arkansans toward self-sufficiency and a brighter future for themselves and their children.

Members of the Russellville TANF staff designed and submitted a TANF flyer to display in local offices as well as in the community. It briefly explains the program, services we provide, and how we can support families in finding employment and economic success to provide for their families. This informational flyer will bring awareness of our program. It will help address our low case load counts as well as to reach out to all Arkansans who are looking for employment and improve not only their lives but the future for their family. Look for this flyer coming soon to an office near you.

Russellville staff members also designed and implemented a “contingency worksheet.” The worksheet has participants answer questions relating to their back-up plans for things like child care, transportation, and housing, with a to-do list and a goals section. This helps participants plan for the “what-if” situations that life throws at us each day, and they begin a goal-setting process. The workers also provide a folder to each new participant that contains an interview-savvy quiz, *Workforce Center Orientation* handout, with *Be Successful at Work* and *Your Future Awaits* booklet. They include a business card with all of their contact information and, of course, any forms the participant needs to verify work participation hours they complete toward their goals.



As TANF staff members across the state, we can all look to the Russellville staff for inspiration. We each need to think about ways we can contribute to the endeavor of making TANF in Arkansas the best program in the country. Many of you have great ideas or systems you use as a case manager that support the mission of our program and the goals of our participants. Consider sharing them with the rest of our team and send them to

[ADWS.attopinfo@arkansas.gov](mailto:ADWS.attopinfo@arkansas.gov).

We are not a TEAM because we work together.  
WE ARE a team because  
WE RESPECT,  
TRUST, and CARE  
for each other.



## Spotlight

### Magnolia DWS TANF: In the Community

On August 2nd, DWS Workforce Specialists Sarah Jones (TEA/Work Pays/Compliance) and Candice Roach (ES/UI) of the Magnolia DWS Local Office attended the Lafayette county Back- To-School Supply Event organized by Lewisville natives, Stacy Harper – Workforce Specialist (UI) of the Fayetteville DWS Local Office, and her sister, LaKisha Bradley of Walmart Corporate office. The event was made possible by partnership with the LIFE Coalition, a non-profit organization and Walmart.



Candice Roach provides TANF promotional materials to an event patron.

Held at the Lafayette County High School Gymnasium, the event connected needy families with vital community resources and information. 260 children received back packs filled with supplies donated by Walmart. The event was attended by 318 people.

The Back-To-School Supply Event in Stamps helped get the kids in the school spirit by inspiring a Pep Rally-like atmosphere. The children played basketball and Hula Hooped while their parents visited the vendor's booths. Later, the families were led in uplifting cheers by Stacy Harper, her team of community organizers and by DWS Personnel. By the end of the day, the children were in the school spirit and ready to succeed!



Brenda, Sarah and Candace eagerly await patrons with school supplies provided by DWS Magnolia LO donations.

On August 6th, Sarah Jones – DWS Workforce Specialist TEA/Compliance/WorkPays), Brenda Hanson – DWS Workforce Specialist (TEA/WorkPays) and Candice Roach – DWS Workforce Specialist (ES/UI) represented DWS at the Back-To-School Bash/Family Care Fair organized by South Arkansas Youth Services and co-sponsored by Columbia County Health Coalition.

The event hosted 20 local service vendors. Nearly 400 children were provided with backpacks, school supplies, haircuts, and lunch – all free of charge. I'm pleased to report that due to the donations of the Magnolia DWS Local Office staff, we were able to provide 800 supply items to the needy families of Lafayette and Columbia Counties. The supplies included pencils, erasers, notebooks and folders.



Children pose for a photo after receiving their school supplies.



Brenda, Candace and Sarah.